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PROGRAM Jack Anderson STATION WTOP Radio  
Mutual Network

DATE February 2, 1980 12:25 P.M. CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT CIA And Freedom Of Information

JACK ANDERSON: Should the CIA be freed to restrict freedom of information?

I'll be back in a minute with an exclusive report. This is Jack Anderson, for Mutual Radio, in Washington.

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In the current climate of international crisis, the White House is pushing a new charter for the Central Intelligence Agency. It would eliminate many of the restraints on the spy agency, particularly in the area of covert activity.

Currently, the CIA must notify eight different Capitol Hill committees before undertaking any covert action. Under the proposed new charter, agency officials would have to give notice only to the House and Senate Intelligence Committees. That would give the CIA more flexibility while still making it accountable to Congress.

But the new charter would limited those seeking access to CIA files only to U.S. citizens. Ostensibly, this provision would prevent foreign governments from using the Freedom of Information Act to extract national security information from the CIA. But the real reason may simply be to prevent the agency embarrassment.

Remember, it was the Freedom of Information Act which led revelations about drug testing, domestic spying and other dirty tricks by the agency in the past.

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